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THE HISTORY OF THE INFANTRY DRILL REGULATIONS
OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY

By Noxon Toomey

St. Louis, Mo.

July, 1917

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THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

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THE HISTORY OF THE INFANTRY DRILL REGULATIONS
OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY.*

By Noxon Toomey

Before the years of the Revolutionary War the British colonies in America supported royal militia companies modeled on the plan of the Militia of England. By a Royal order of 1764 these companies were poorly instructed in the infantry drill of the British regulars (1) which was adapted from the regulations of the Prussian infantry. The Prussian drill was devised by by Leopold I., Prince of Anhalt-Dessau, who taught it to the regiments of Frederick the Great and made of them a well drilled army. The militias of the provinces of Massachusetts Bay, Connecticut and Rhode Island were instructed in the tactics of the Norfolk militia of 1759.(2) The Norfolk tactics was the drill of the old train bands and in them one finds for the last time the manual of the halberd and and pike.(3)

Such training the Continental armies had was in the British drill and not until the spring of 1778, at Valley Forge, were they drilled by Baron von Steuben.** The practical work of Steuben resulted in his publishing his Regulations (4) in 1779. These Regulations were not a translation of the Prussian tactics, as frequently stated, but were an adaptation based on the Prussian drill. They were made official by the Continental Congress on March 29, 1779. In 1782, after Congress had authorized the Army of the United States, it made Steuben's Regulations the official drill system for it, but militia regiments were permitted to use any drill system. Steuben's plan of drill remained official for the regular army until March 30, 1812 when they were superceded by Smyth's tactics. However, Steuben's Regulations were followed by the larger part of the regular army until 1815 and by part of the militia until 1820. Steuben's Regulations were out of print by 1808 and from that date until the close of the second war with England there was no uniformity in infantry drill, as several different systems were in use. The characteristics of Steuben's plan of drill was the omission of all that was not practical and useful, and the providing for a greater openness of movements and formations during combat. He found that the Continental soldiers had discarded their bayonets as of no value. Due to his teaching of the use and value of the bayonet, Stony Point was later taken by a bayonet charge, not a shot being fired. He stopped the men from taking home their muskets as keepsakes and insisted upon the proper care of accoutrement.

The first of the unofficial systems to be introduced was the French system of 1791 *** as modified by Napoleon in 1805. The Napoleonic system was introduced by Mac Donald who published in 1807 a quite poor translation of the French tactics(5). This translation was republished in 1809 by Lieut.-Col. William Duane, of the Rifles, in his American Military Library.(6) A somewhat corrected edition was published in Boston by Colonel De Lacroix in 1810.(7) A work published in Boston in 1811 by Gen.

* Only two articles have been published on the history of the United States Infantry drill:

1- The History of our Tactics. An unsigned editorial in the Army and Navy Journal, February 11, 1888.

2- History of the Drill Regulations. A brief note appended to the Army and Navy Journal edition of the drill regulations of 1891.

See also: Lloyd, E.M. A Review of the History of Infantry.

London, Longmans, Green and Co., 1908. Pp. xi,303, bibliography.

** Kapp, Friedrich Leben des amerikanischen Generals Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben. Philadelphia, Schaefer und Keradi, (c 1856), xxxvii, 667, 8-vo.

*** Regiment concernant l'exercice et les manœuvres de l'infanterie; du lieu. 1811.

Isaac Maltby met with some favor in Massachusetts.(8) Smirk's "Review of a Battalion" was also used in this country(9). At the outbreak of the War of 1812 Colonel Alexander Smyth, Inspector-General of the Army, published a set of drill regulations (10) at the request of the Secretary of War. Smyth's work was a good improvement and abridgement of Mac Donald's translation of the French tactics. On March 30, 1812 they were ordered to supersede Steuben's tactics in the regular army. In the same year was published a second edition of the work to which Smyth put his name. This system was probably used somewhat up to 1815 although Duane's Handbook was made regulation on March 19, 1813.

In the "Hand-book for Infantry"(11) of William Duane, a former editor, we have the work of an enthusiast who undertook to diffuse military knowledge in America.**** His system of drill was largely original and at first incomplete. The first part was finished in 1808 but not published until 1812, after it had been voted on favorably by the House of Representatives. While his system was under consideration by the Senate Colonel Duane promised its completion. It was then made the regulation drill for the army by a General Order of the War Department on March 19, 1813. The system was completed in 1814 but the War Department order had done little to spread its employment, as only four regiments of regulars and some of the Virginia, New York, Jersey, and Pennsylvania militia used it. A small book based on Duane's first publication was printed in South Carolina. Duane's plan of drill met with much opposition due to politics, and because it was impractical, it resembling a fancy exhibition drill.

In 1813 Congress, either uninformed of the official status of Duane's tactics or considering them unsuitable, passed a resolution requesting the President "to cause to be prepared and laid before Congress, as soon as practicable, a military system of discipline for the infantry of the army and militia of the United States". Owing to the occupation of all the principal officers with the war, no action was taken on this resolution, and every tactical officer continued to use the system he preferred. The real step towards training the army was made in 1814 when Major General Scott instructed in person the two brigades of Brown's division in camp at Buffalo. He used an edition of Mac Donald's translation of the French tactics, probably Smyth's abridgement, and a copy of the original French with which to correct them. It was to that instruction that the victories which followed are ascribed. This was our first extensive use of the French drill. In December 1814, Congress, by resolution, asked for their revision, to adapt them to the requirements of our army. A board was appointed for this purpose, consisting of General Scott; General Swift, Chief of Engineers; Lieut-Col. J.R. Fenwick, of the Artillery; Col. William Cumming, Adjutant General; and Col. William Drayton of the 18th Infantry. The French tactics as modified by this board and ordered as regulation by the War Department on Feb. 28, 1815, are known as the "system of 1815"(12). Several states passed laws adopting the system for their militias.

Previous to 1816 companies were known by the names of their captains, which were constantly changing, and so creating confusion. At the suggestion of Col. C.K. Gardiner, the present plan of designating the companies by the letters of the alphabet was introduced. Another important improvement was ordered May 12, 1820 when Congress passed an act requiring the militia to conform to the drill regulations of the United States Army.

The edition of the system of 1815 becoming exhausted another board was ordered in 1824. This board consisted of General Scott, Col. Hugh Brady, Col. John R. Fenwick, Capt. Wm. J. Worth, and Sylvanus Thayer. The drill regulations these officers drew up differed from the regulations of 1815 in only minor matters such as slight changes in some commands, the posting of officers and noncommissioned officers, the placing of one of the light companies on the left flank as a rifle company, converting the right flank company into grenadiers, and a few other changes. The board, however, annotated the work with so many "remarks" that the manual was expanded into two large volumes. These tactics were transmitted to the War Department on Dec. 15, 1824, and was ordered the regulation drill on Jan. 5, 1825.(13) As the drill manual

**** Besides his Handbook he published the American Military Library (1809), and a large Military Dictionary (1810), without prospects of profit.

On 10, 1813, the following was written by the same person:

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Dwyer was appointed for this purpose, consisting of General Scott, General Staff,
Chief, School for their position, to which they had representatives of our army. A
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had been made too voluminous for the use of militia officers another board was ordered Oct. 5, 1826. This board finished an abstract of the larger work on Dec. 5, 1826. Their abridgement was later published for the use of the militia.(14)

Although the French tactics that our army had used, with several modifications, since 1812 were accepted as satisfactory, the French in 1827 resolved upon a modification of their tactics and they established a camp for experimentation at St. Omar. Guibert's work resulted from the experiments, and its publication in France in 1831 was followed by an Act of Congress (April 8, 1834) authorizing another revision of our infantry drill. Again General Scott was called upon and on Feb. 3, 1835 he gave to the War Department the drill tactics that were made regulation on April 10, 1835, (15) and were known by his name until largely superseded by Hardee's tactics in 1855. Scott's drill required a very stiff set up; its slow and formal movements were dignified but wearisome. Besides making a few minor changes in posts and commands, Scott sized the company from right to left in place of the previous custom of putting the tallest men in the rear rank and sizing equally from both flanks. Scott's drill required frequent countermarching by column closed in mass, which he had substituted for the moving of alternate columns by flank outside of the column, and then making the countermarch. This frequent counter marching did not afford that openness and celerity of movement which the French later found necessary from their experiences in Algiers. Scott revised his tactics in 1839 but the improvements in firearms finally compelled a change from the near goose-step of his drill. As the result it was ordered that Brevet Lieut.-Col. William J. Hardee, major, 2d Cavalry, would prepare a modification of the tactics for the French chasseurs-a-pied (ordinance of 1845).

From the peculiarity of its double quick step Hardee's Tactics were known as the "shanghai drill". They tended to a greater individualization of the soldier and introduced a greater freedom of movement, but adhered to Scott's tactics in the principles of formation. The old method of obliquing, adapted only to men with one leg shorter than the other, was changed to the more rational half-face method. The right-about while marching, firing by ranks, and the comrades in battle principle were also introduced. March 29, 1855, Hardee's Tactics were ordered to replace Scott's but only as far as to include the school of the battalion.(17) At the outbreak of the Civil War Hardee joined the Confederacy and his tactics were used by the Confederate armies throughout the war. During the first year and a half of the war the Federal troops, under an order of May 1, 1861, used an exact reprint of Hardee's work, which did not however mention his name.(18)

The methods for manoeuvring regiments and brigades in combat as provided for by Scott were no longer used as they had become obsolete. Since the reprint of Hardee's Tactics did not provide for regimental or brigade movements, two works on the evolutions of the line were published unofficially, one by Duffield and one by Coppee.

(20) This lack of satisfactory methods for brigade movements caused the War Department to order, on Aug. 11, 1862, the adoption of the Infantry Tactics of Brig.-Gen. Silas Casey.(21) Gen. Casey had been the president of the board that approved Hardee's Tactics in 1854, and in his new work he retained Hardee's schools of the soldier and of the company. He effected only a few changes in the school of the battalion, as the War Department would not authorize his plan of skirmish or covering companies. In his movements for larger forces he made the brigade the tactical unit and introduced the deploying on heads of columns as the means of forming line of battle.

Casey's drill regulations were superseded by General Upton's system on August 1, 1867.(22) Upton modeled his tactics upon the foot drill of the artillery prepared by Barry and Hunt. In this drill inversions were dispensed with and the squad of four files was introduced. The all important movements in Upton's plan were the double wheelings or turnings by fours. Upton's plan of drill contained several innovations of value such as the introduction of bayonet exercises, platoon movements and the deploying as skirmishers from column. In it we find many of the essentials of our present drill. Unfortunately the descriptions of movements as given in the first edition of Upton's text were not lucidly written. The ambiguities necessitated many official interpretations, and most of his text underwent minute dissection and

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criticism. Following the work of the Board convened in 1869 at Fort Leavenworth, to standardize the drill of the three line services, Upton published in 1873 a revision of his drill regulations. This revision chiefly effected a simplification in the turnings by squads, and his close order drill continued to draw forth many suggestions for its improvement. At the time of his death in 1881 Upton had nearly finished a second revision. This revision, completed by General Alexander, was laid board, convened in Washington, D.C. in February, 1888, to revise the drill of the light artillery, infantry and cavalry. Probably from Upton's last revision was adopted the twelve company-three battalion regiment, movements by sections of two squads, and mass formations in battalion movements. After working for three years this Board composed a system of infantry drill that was ordered by the Secretary of War to supersede Upton's tactics on Oct. 3, 1891.

The tactics introduced in 1891 proved to be quite satisfactory and constituted the main part of the drill regulations that were in force during the Spanish-American war and the Philippine insurrection. The board that prepared these tactics was composed of Lieut.-Cols. J.C. Bates and G.B. Sanford, Majors H.C. Hasbrouck and John C. Gilmore, Capts. J.T. Haskell, B.S. Godfrey and J.M. Lancaster, and Lieuts. G. Andrew and J.T. French, Jr. as recorders. The new drill system did not depart from the general character of Upton's tactics but introduced the following improvements: a lengthening of the step from 28 to 30 inches and a quickening of the cadence from 110 to 120 per minute with abolition of the old common time (cadence of 90 per minute). In the manual of arms the method for inspection of arms and for the stacking of arms was changed, and "rest on arms" and "reverse arms" were omitted, and "sling arms" was introduced. The number of setting-up exercises was increased. The hand salute was made the same for officers and men except that officers were to habitually salute with the right hand (unless engaged) instead of the far hand. The salute was also made shorter and simpler. As "target practice" had been made the subject of a special manual it was dropped from the drill book. In extended order drill, signals were introduced and the principles of minor tactics were discussed more fully. Skirmish movements were simplified, particularly deployment and rallying, and the section two squads was introduced as a unit. In the evolution of larger commands the old "close column" was expanded into mass formations. Divisional and almost all formal brigade movements were omitted.

Up to 1895 the interpretation of the new regulations had given rise to no real difficulties and they had required no changes. However, when the Old Springfield rifle was replaced by the Krag-Jorgensen rifle in 1895, a new manual of arms became necessary, so a suitable manual was made official on June 17, 1895. In this new manual "carry arms" was omitted, "right shoulder arms" was made to correspond with the old "left shoulder arms", bayonets were fixed and unfixed in a different manner, the rifle salute at the carry was replaced by the old "sergeant's salute" with the piece at the shoulder. There were minute changes in the other positions of the piece, particularly "secure arms". Owing to the rifle having a magazine, the movements of "open chamber" and "close chamber" were introduced for the purpose of inspection. Due partly to the bolt mechanism of the rifle the commands for loadings and firings were greatly changed. With the advent of modern field artillery and the necessity of employing United States troops against forces armed with the Mauser rifle it was found that the regulations for extended order formations should be revised. As a result an improved set of skirmish formations was published officially by Gen. Thomas H. Ruger in 1898. (24)

Shortly after the beginning of the Twentieth Century, the introduction of the Springfield rifle, model 1903, the changes in equipment, tentage, etc., and the changes in minor tactics and tactical organization necessitated a new system that would incorporate previous changes and the newer requirements. Accordingly in 1902 the Chief of Staff directed a special section of the General Staff to prepare a revision of the infantry drill. This revision was thorough and practical and it was not accepted and made official until June 23, 1904. This manual differed greatly in appearance from the drill book of 1891, but it was made up largely of the former drill modified by the manual of 1895 and Ruger's extended order drill. The noteworthy changes that it introduced were due to the new rifle, and to the new method

for effecting turnings and wheelings by the men of an element obliquing as separate echelons into line instead of the element swinging as a whole, like a barn door. Bayonet exercises were dropped and the setting up exercises were reduced from seventeen to six, due to the introduction of Butt's physical drill. For purposes of instruction there were introduced "in place halt", "as you were", "resume march" and "to the rear march", while the methods for marking time, kneeling, lying down and rising were slightly improved; but "right forward, fours right" was discontinued. Just prior to 1904 the notion that the bayonet was no longer an efficient weapon gained official credence. For this reason, and the desire to lighten the soldier's equipment, the knife bayonet was replaced by a worthless rod to be pulled out of the barrel casing for use as a bayonet. This mistake was corrected in April, 1907 when the manual of 1904 was changed to provide for a new knife bayonet.

By 1911 the studies of the General Staff had effected marked improvements in organization, equipment, and in troop control under fire. These changes required a revision of the infantry manual to provide for the new pack, etc., the new organization in close and extended order and the fuller and more rational discussion of minor tactics. In the regulations for infantry drill made official on August 19, 1911 we have the present drill regulations as modified a little during the past few years. In these latest regulations we find that the formal movements, ceremonies, etc. are improved but that they are almost overshadowed by the prominence given to combat principles.

Following modern tactics, the regulations of 1911 do not prescribe movements for brigades, and regimental drill is reduced to a few formations for ceremonies and close order movements. The close order drill of 1904 has been improved by the reintroduction of "right forward, fours right" (right by squads), by the full step being taken up automatically as soon as a unit has completed a turn or a wheel, and by file closers being posted close in to that flank towards which a line of squads has formed column. Right by twos or files and their reverse have been improved; and opening and closing ranks are no longer required except for inspection of equipment. Commands have been somewhat simplified, and more emphasis has been placed on signals. The company has been enlarged and provision has been made for four platoons, with a consequent reposting of platoon leaders and guides. In the manual of arms "sling" and "securio" arms have been omitted and "inspection arms", "left shoulder arms" from right shoulder, "fix bayonets" and "charge bayonets" have been changed. The position of the soldier has been made more natural, and the about face for officers was extended to enlisted men. In extended order, deployment has been changed and new methods for advancing -- by thin lines, and column of files -- have been introduced. The interval in extended order has been reduced from two paces to a half pace, and the rally has been omitted. The normal squad may have a number of additional men. Fire control has been changed somewhat. A sleeping bag made of the new poncho was described, and a new shelter tent with poles replaced by rifles was prescribed (modified Sept. 14). Due to the introduction of the new pack, model 1910, inspection of equipment was changed (amended Aug. 1916). Provision was made for a mounted detachment and a machine gun company. A modernized manual of the bayonet was prescribed February 20, 1913. In 1913 the salute was restricted to the right hand and when covered, but C. I.D.R. No. 18, Jan., 1917 has reintroduced some of the previous methods of saluting. Many bugle signals have been replaced by arm signals (supplemented May, 1916); and since 1914 the whistle and code signals have been changed several times and the arm semaphore introduced.

Summary: The changes in drill during the past century and a half center about the increasing effectiveness of arms and the resulting growth of skirmish formations. This extended order began with the old rifle companies but was not developed until after the Civil war; it reached its maximum tenuity following experiences in the close country of Cuba and the Philippines, but it now consists in a more compact line(s) whose fire and discipline can be better controlled. The regimental units were frequently increased in size causing an increasing difficulty of control in skirmish formation, hence the tactical unit passed from the brigade to the regiment -- then to the battalion. There necessarily developed a system of signals, first by trumpet, later by arm, flag and whistle. Close order drill slowly progressed from

the cumbersome "evolutions" of the old French school, through the stiff and stately battle parades of Scott to the quicker and more direct movements of Hardee, and finally to Upton's method of wheeling and its later improvements. Ceremonies and formations in rank have not changed essentially, but a more rational set up has gradually prevailed, and the later drill books record the development of the shelter tent, improved packs and other material conveniences. In the manual of arms can be traced the changes from the smooth bore muzzle loader, through the Minnie rifle and the breech loader to the small bore magazine rifle. The bayonet, which was almost discarded fifteen years ago, has again found its place in our drill, and the old grenade companies may again live in the yet unofficial drill for bombing squads. The drill regulations have broadened out to include the elements of minor tactics.

COMPLETE LITERATURE

In some instances I have been unable to list all editions of each work. Copies of all of the publications are in my library but for permission to see some editions I am indebted to Messrs. J.W.Cheney and J. Edwin Young of the Library of the War College, Washington, D.C., and to the Public Libraries of St. Louis, New York, Boston, Philadelphia, New Orleans and San Francisco.

1.-A new manual exercise for the foot. Very useful for the army and militia.

New-York: Printed by Hugh Gainc, 1759.

The Manual Exercise, as ordered by His Majesty in 1764. Together with plans and explanations of the method generally practiced at reviews and field days, &c., by much the best and completest book of the sort ever published in this province, being the same used by all the militia of this, and all the other counties (but the northern district) in this colony. By Edward Harvey.

New-York: Printed and sold by W.Weyman, in Broad-Street, 1766.

The New Manual and Platoon Exercise as ordered by His Majesty in 1764: with an exercise. By Edward Harvey. New-York, 1769. 8-vo.

The Manual Exercise....district) in this colony. By Edward Harvey.

New York, Printed by Hugh Gainc, 1773.

The Manual....Field Days By Ed... Boston: Printed by T. and J. Fleet at the Heart and Crown in Cornhill. (1774) Pp.(39),(1), 2 folding pl., 4-to.

Same. Massachussetts-Bay: Boston: Printed and sold by Isaiah Thomas at his Printing Office near the mill bridge. (1774). Pp.(31), 8-vo.

Same. Newbury Port: Printed and sold by E.Lunt and H.W.Tinges. 1774. 4-to.

Same. Baltimore: Printed and sold by M. K. Goddard, 1775.

Same. Philadelphia: Sold by J.Humphreys, R.Bell and R.Aitken. MDCCCLXXVI. Pp.35, 8-vo.

Same. New York: Printed by H. Gainc. 1777. Same: 1780. Pp. 35, 4-to.

2.-A/Plan of Exercises,/for the militia of/Massachussetts-Bay;/Extracted/from the Plan of Discipline,/of the/Norfolk Militia. (By William Windham, and George 1-st Marquis Townshend.) Boston: Printed and sold by Richard Draper, 1768. 8-vo.

Same. 3-Ed., 1771. Pp. 92, 8-vo.

A/Plan of Exercise,/for the/Militia/of the Province of the/Massachusets-Bay:/ Extracted/From the Plan of Discipline,/for the/Norfolk Militia/ Boston: New England:/Printed by Richard Draper, Printer to His Excellency/the Governor and the Honorable His Majesty's Council./ M,DCC,LXXII./ Sold at his Printing-Office in Newbury Street.

A plan of exercise for the militia of the colony of Connecticut, extracted from the plan of discipline for the Norfolk militia.

New Haven: Printed by T. and S. Green. 1772. Pp. 60, 12-mo.

Same. New London: Printed and sold by Timothy Green, 1772. Pp. (72), 12-mo.

A/Plan of Exercise,/.....Massachusets-Bay:/ Fifth Edition. New England:/ Draper's Printing Office, 1774. Pp. 107. 8-vo.

The manual exercise as ordered by his Majesty in 1764, and now generally adopted in Connecticut, Rhode-Island and Massachussetts-Bay. New Haven: Printed and sold by Thomas and Samuel Green. (1774). 12-mo.

3.-A plan of discipline for the Norfolk militia, London, 1759.

4.-Regulations/for the/Order and Discipline/of the/Troops/of the/United States/

[illegible]

COPIES TO THE

Part I/Philadelphia:/Printed by Styner and Cist, in Second-Street./MDCCLXXIX.
 Pp. 154,(9), 8 folding pl., 12-mo. A Part II was never published.
 For the/Use of the Militia/of Pennsylvania./An/Abstract /Of a System of/Military
 Discipline:/Framed by/The Hon. the Baron Steuben,/Major General and Instructor
 General of the/Armies of the United States./Approved by/His Excellency General
 Washington./Confirmed by the Hon. the Congress./ Philadelphia:/Printed by
 Francis Bailey, in Market-Street./M.DCC.LXXIX./ Small 8-vo., Pp. 38.
 RegulationsPrinted by Charles Cist, Fourth and Arch Streets. 1782.
 Pp. 77 (7) iv, 8 plates, 12-mo.
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